

THE FIRST WORD

March, 2016

Transportation Funding Still Up In The Air as Legislature Completes First Month of Work

The Oklahoma Legislative Session is now one month old, and the Legislature is still looking at a variety of way to overcome the \$1.3 Billion deficit in next years budget.

With the Oklahoma Department of Transportation "ROADS" fund receiving nearing \$500 million annually from the state's General Revenue Fund, the ROADS fund it an obvious target. That became even more clear two weeks ago when the Senate Finance voted to "freeze" the ROADS fund at 2013 levels.

While there are many ideas being floated around the Rotunda, one that seems to be gaining some traction is for the ROADS fund to be "docked" some \$300 Million this year, and in turn, the Legislature would allow ODOT to issue an equal amount of bonds to offset the revenue loss. While, in theory, this would keep ODOT "whole" for this coming fiscal year, eventually ODOT would have to repay the bonds and interest, and without an additional revenue stream to cover the debt, ODOT would be in the "hole"....not "whole"in coming years.

One concern is that this would be a "one time" solution to what might be an ongoing budgetary problem. Without a major turnaround in the national and state economy, it's expected that the state will be facing a revenue shortfall again next year. Maybe not as dramatic as this year's revenue failure, but a shortfall none the less. If that happens, the ROADS fund would again be a target.

There's still a long way to go before this or any other ideas become reality. There's still three months left in the session, and anything could happen in those three months.

As for other activities around the Capitol of interest to ACEC OKLAHOMA, the first major deadline of the session passed last Thursday, and nearly 2,500 bills which were either introduced or were "Carry Over" bills from last session "died" for the session. With that, there are around 1,100 bills still active and ACEC OKLAHOMA has several on our radar.

One of the bills that failed to make it past deadline would have prevented ODOT from hiring consultants for a two-year period. This was the first direct attack in many years on consultants and ACEC OKLAHOMA members. Through our efforts and the efforts of our partners, the bill was never heard in the Senate Transportation Committee and is dead for the session.

Also, the State Board of Licensure has a bill which make some important changes to the Licensing law by keeping Oklahoma statutes in line with the national "Model Law." ACEC OKLAHOMA supports the bill, which is awaiting action by the full Senate.

That's a quick wrap on activity so far. ACEC OKLAHOMA will be watching the session closely, and be ready to act on these and other issues which may arise in the coming weeks.

TRUST Transportation Day at the Capitol

Wed, March 9, 2016

**State Capitol Building, 2nd Floor Rotunda
2300 North Lincoln Boulevard**

11:45 a.m.

Registration & Legislative Luncheon

12:45 p.m.

**Legislative Briefings
Blue Room**

RSVP with Helra

HelraHan@gmail.com or (405) 802-8184

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President's Report

March, 2015

David Raymond, ACEC President

Happy Super Tuesday! Notwithstanding political developments, our fast-approaching Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. will address important funding and regulatory challenges, including FAA reauthorization, WRRDA, energy legislation and FLSA reform. The Convention's business practice and markets sessions will focus on bottom-line issues. [Click here](#) for Convention registration information and remember that the "early bird" discounts deadline is March 21st. Also, the Nominating Committee is soliciting applications for ACEC's chair-elect and three vice-chair positions for terms commencing April 2017 on ACEC's Executive Committee. I would encourage MO leaders who have been active in ACEC and who are interested in national leadership positions to seriously consider becoming candidates and submit their applications through state MOs to the national office by April 1, 2016 (Please feel free to call me if you wish to discuss this further).

Dave

General

- Congratulations to ACEC/Hawaii for meeting their 2016 ACEC/PAC fundraising goal, joining Indiana as the first states to cross the PAC finish line this year; and thank you to Tony Bartolomeo of Pennoni Associates (PA), Phil Houser of Alfred Benesch & Company (IL), and Ralph Christie of Merrick & Company (CO) for already contributing the maximum allowable limit (\$5,000) to ACEC/PAC this year.

- A Minuteman Fund grant was approved for ACEC/Kansas to help them defeat state efforts to reduce contracting-out and repeal QBS.

- EEA national judges selected 24 Grand and Honor Award winners which will be recognized along with 127 National Recognition Award winners on April 19, at the Annual Convention.

- February's most popular webinar was "2015 Year in Review – Legal Issues for Engineers," a timely overview of recent legal decisions and an update on common legal issues affecting our firms, including indemnification, third party beneficiaries and claims, code compliance, and damages.

Government Advocacy

- Helped to secure an 11 percent increase in Airport Improvement Program funding and beneficial provisions for drone use in House committee FAA reauthorization bill.

- The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) and the Cuban Embassy briefed ACEC's International Committee on market opportunities and programs.

- ACEC-endorsed legislation was passed out of the Senate's Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee which will limit both one-phase design-build and reverse-auctions in design-build projects in federal civil construction.

- Government cybersecurity experts from the Senate and federal agencies outlined new voluntary and regulatory initiatives underway to bolster cybersecurity for engineering services at the Environment & Energy Committee winter meeting.

- Endorsed and helped build support for a bipartisan congressional letter with 108 signatures asking the Department of Labor to revise its proposed onerous overtime pay rule.

- Representatives Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), John Duncan (R-TN), and Richard Hanna (R-NY) reintroduced ACEC-backed legislation to create a dedicated trust fund for water projects, while Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced legislation to give states greater flexibility to raise funds in the bond market to address water needs.

- Briefed DPC, ACEC/Wisconsin and ACEC/Virginia on key federal legislative and regulatory priorities.

